Spring 2019
MWF 12:00-12:50 • HUMN 119

FWIS 141:
Literature and Environment

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to the increasingly relevant fields of ecocriticism and the environmental humanities. We will examine literature, criticism, and film from the late eighteenth century to the present with an eye to determining how these texts represent the relationships between humans and nonhumans, and their physical environments. We will give particular attention to how these texts illuminate four key terms—"nature," "life," "energy," and "the body"—around which this course is organized.

Our textual analyses will also allow us to explore a number of broader questions, including: how do language and other symbolic systems shape our perceptions of our physical environment? How has the history of the physical environment shaped the history of literature and the arts? How have our definitions of "nature," "life," "energy," and "the body" changed over time, and how do such changes affect the values we attach to these terms? What is the role of literature in raising awareness of environmental issues? How do environmental issues intersect with social issues related to class, gender, race, and ability? Students in this course will engage these and related questions through a variety of formal and informal writing assignments, interdisciplinary research, and a multisensory "practicum" in environmental perception and reflection in coordination with Rice's new Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden.

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London
And the voices of Bath & Canterbury & York & Edinburgh Cry
Over the Plow of Nations in the strong hand of Albion thundering along
Among the Fires of the Druid & the deep black rethundering Waters
Of the Atlantic which poured in impetuous loud loud laughs & howlings
And the Great Voice of the Atlantic howling over the Druid Aleurs.
Weeping over her Children in Stone-henge in Malden & Colchester
Round the Rocky Peak of Derbyshire London Stone & Kensingtons Bower
What is a Wife & what is a Harlot? What is a Church? & What
Is a Theatre? are they Two & not One? can they Exist Separate?
Are not Religion & Politics the Same Thing? Brotherhood is Religion
O Demonstrations of Reason Dividing Families in Cruelty & Pride!
But Albion Fled from the Divine Vision with the Plow of Nations unflaming
The Living Creatures mustering and Albion fell into the Furrows and
The Plow Went over him & the Land was Plowed in among the Dead
And his Spectre rose over the sturdy Plow. Albion fled beneath the Plow
Till he came to the Rock of Ages: & he took his Seat upon the Rock.
Wonder siez'd all in Eternity: to behold the Divine Vision open
The Center into an Expanse, & the Center rolled out into an Expanse
Jerusalem

Required Texts

Please purchase the following texts:

- Ursula Le Guin, *Buffalo Gals, Won't You Come Out Tonight* (ISBN 978-08765401718)
- Indra Sinha, *Animal's People* (ISBN 978-1416578796)
- Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (ISBN 978-0446603775)
- Emerson and Thoreau, *Nature/Walking* (ISBN 978-0807014196)

The following texts will be made available through Canvas:

- Ursula Heise, "A Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism"
- Tim Morton, "Critical Thinking"
- Poems by Coleridge and Blake
- William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness"
- Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow" and "The Obligation to Endure"
- Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man*
- Anna Tsing, "What's Left?"

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this FWIS course, students will be able to:

- Enhance their understanding of the central place of writing and communication in the learning process and in academic life
- Learn strategies for analyzing, synthesizing, and responding to college level readings
- Improve their ability to communicate correctly and effectively in writing and in speech, taking into account audience and purpose
- Become comfortable with writing as a process and learn strategies—for instance, prewriting, outlining, and revision—for working through that process
- Learn appropriate use of the work of others and, where necessary, specific practices of citation
- Learn to articulate oral arguments and to respond productively to arguments of others in formal presentations and in class discussion

In addition to these FWIS course objectives, students taking this course will be able to:

- Recognize and communicate the ways in which literature and other forms of artistic media have advanced environmental understanding
- Appropriately apply the theoretical approaches of ecocriticism and the environmental humanities to literature and media
- Identify and articulate the implications of environmental issues for human society and health in the context of broader public debates
- Critically examine cultural assumptions embedded in our concepts of "nature," "life," "energy," "the body," and related terms
- Understand and execute the necessary steps for completing a research project in the humanities

Course Requirements

You must complete the following requirements to pass this course:

- Complete all readings and assignments
- Have no more than **2** absences
- Participate in all in-class discussions and activities
- Contribute **weekly** to our course blog (instructions below)
- Give **1** informal presentation and **1** formal presentation (as part of research project)
- Write **2** critical essays (1,250-1,500 words)
- Complete **1** research project, which includes a proposal, formal presentation, and research paper (2,250-2,500 words)

Course Assignments

***Note that all submitted written work should be doubled-spaced, have 1-inch margins, use 12 pt. Times New Roman font, and be uploaded to Canvas by the deadline. Word documents only please (.doc or .docx)**

Diagnostic Writing Assignment: What does the word "environment" mean to you? Is an "environment" the same thing as "nature," or "the wilderness"? Write several substantive paragraphs explaining your answer. **500 words minimum.**

"Micro-landscape" Practicum with the Holistic Garden + Weekly Blog. This semester, we will be working on various projects in Rice's new Holistic Garden and Sustainable Agriculture Project. These projects are designed to teach you the principles of sustainable urban gardening, various growing techniques and ecological concepts, and ecological awareness. **Every Sunday by 8 am,*** for the duration of this course, you will submit your observations (including photographs, if desired) about your particular gardening project and the contours of its micro-landscape in a **1-2 page blog post** on our course blog, which can be found at ricefwis141.wordpress.com. A synthesis of your observations will form part of your final project. On days when weather prevents us from working in the Garden, we will meet in our regular classroom at our usual time. ***Note:** You are required to submit 10 blog posts total, which means that you may choose not to submit a blog post one week.

Short Writing Assignments: You will be asked to complete **three different kinds** of short writing assignments: a **250-word précis** of an assigned critical essay; a **150-word close reading** of a passage of your choice (from the assigned readings); and **revisions of the first sentence and first paragraph** of your first critical essay.

Presentations: You will be asked to deliver both an informal and formal presentation**.** For the informal presentation, in the first week of classes, you will sign up to **introduce a specific text to the class in a 5-7 minute presentation**. Your introduction should include an overview of central ideas in the text, a brief analysis of how the formal features of the text express those key ideas, any relevant contextual or historical information, and a minimum of two questions for class discussion. Second, as part of your final research project, in the last week of classes you will give a **formal 10-12 minute presentation (with poster, like those in poster sessions held by the sciences) of the research you will be conducting for your final project** (see instructions for research project below).

Critical Essays: A critical essay presents an original and well-supported argument about at least **one** of our literary texts, using at least **one** critical text or article from our syllabus. You are welcome to engage with relevant outside readings, but please discuss your source with me prior to turning in your paper. For these two essays, **you will first hand in an outline that includes your working thesis and a list of supporting evidence, including passages from the text**. **1,250-1,500 words.** See course policies below for guidelines on revisions.

Final Research Project: The research component of this course consists of three different assignments—a **proposal**, a **formal presentation** of your research and findings, and the **research paper** itself. The goal of this research project is to help you synthesize your experiential, literary, critical, and scientific knowledge with your experience volunteering in the Holistic Garden in the context of questions and debates surrounding academic and public conversations about environmental issues, as well as those that have arisen from our readings and class discussions.

*Note that I will provide rubrics and further details for each of the major assignments (presentations, critical essays, and research project) before they are due. Also note my revision policy under the "Course Policies" heading below.

Evaluation

- Participation (including diagnostic writing and all other in-class activities) 25%
- Short writing assignments (7% total)
  - Précis 2%
  - Close reading 3%
  - First sentence and first paragraph revisions 2%
- Micro-landscape practicum and weekly blog posts 10%
- First solo in-class presentation 3%
- Critical Essays 12.5% each (25% total)
- Research Project 30%
  - Proposal 5%
  - Second in-class formal presentation 10%
  - Research paper 15%

How I Evaluate Your Writing**:**

Three main criteria matter the most to me:

- clear organization, clear main idea and line of argument/analysis
- thoughtful development of ideas with specific references to the text[s]
- careful editing and proofreading

- An **A paper** meets all of these criteria AND has an engaging, creative, insightful thesis, a compelling introduction and conclusion, well developed analysis, and almost no technical control errors [grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, tone].
- A **B paper** has an interesting thesis, but it may need further refinement, and the analysis may fail to support some of its claims, or the conclusion need further development.
- A **C paper** does not have a clear thesis or only repeats points raised in class, does not develop analysis with clear topic sentences or have an adequate conclusion that grows out of the analysis, and may have serious technical errors or editing problems.
- A **D paper** has no thesis or a seriously flawed one, many problems with development of ideas and technical control.
- An **F paper** is one that was turned in late or lost points for lateness or contains plagiarism.

Course Policies

Attendance: You are allowed **2** absences, no questions asked. Further absences will negatively impact your participation grade. If you miss a class, you are responsible for catching up on the notes and discussion. **If you arrive more than ten minutes late, you will be marked absent.** Emergency situations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Participation: Regular participation is an *essential* part of this course. Please arrive at class, and the Holistic Garden, on time and prepared to make an active contribution to class discussion, or on Fridays, the Garden. Active participation in the classroom entails answering questions posed by the instructor and other students, posing your own inquiries about the text, and contributing to small-group work. **Also remember to bring the assigned reading to class each day.**

Active participation in the Garden means volunteering there every Friday for the duration of our normal class time (12-12:50).

Late Work Policy**:** All written work must be posted to Canvas by the appointed due date. Any late work drops one letter grade each day (week or weekend) it is late. Late work may be no more than three days late, after which it will receive a failing grade. Please back up your files regularly, since there are no extensions for technology mishaps.

Revisions: I accept and encourage revisions of all written material, but revisions must be submitted to me electronically **no later than one week** after the first draft was returned to you. Your **final draft** should reflect the feedback of your peers in the workshop and my comments given on the first draft. The outline and all drafts will be taken into account in your paper grades.

Center for Academic & Professional Communication: You are encouraged to make appointments with the peer consultants at the Center for Academic & Professional Communication (located on the second floor of Fondren Library) for assistance with the assignments in this course. Consultants at the Center *do not* proofread or edit your work, but they can provide feedback on topics such as the organization of your paper or presentation, the coherence of your argument, appropriate sentence structure, and consistent grammatical errors. Appointments can be scheduled online at the Center's website http://cwovc.rice.edu

Honor Code**:** One of the purposes of FWIS is to help new students understand the Rice Honor Code and, more explicitly, to teach students the rules of paraphrasing and scholarly attribution, and the appropriate uses of different types of evidence. Accordingly, FWIS instructors will take an educational approach to transgressions of these rules and respond to errors in these areas foremost as issues for grading and opportunities to correct errors, rather than as instances of academic dishonesty. At the same time, all FWIS instructors retain the authority to treat instances of repeat or egregious violations as matters for the attention of the Rice Honor Council.

In this course, students are expected to do the actual writing of their assignments on their own, with no outside help from anyone else. However, students are strongly encouraged (and will sometimes be required) to collaborate on all other aspects of their coursework; including discussing assignments, reading each other's work, and making suggestions for editing and revision. If you have any questions, please ask me or see the Honor Code. Rice's Honor Code is available here: http://honor.rice.edu/

Technology**:** The use of cell phones, laptops, and tablets is **not** allowed during class time. Use of these devices in class will negatively impact your participation grade. See me if you have any questions.

Disability**:** If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodation, please see me during the first two weeks of class. Any arrangements made will be confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Disability Services in the Allen Center.

Course Schedule

*Note: This schedule is subject to change.

Week 1 Introductions

M 1/7 Introduction and overview of course and syllabus

W 1/9 Ursula Heise, "A Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism"
→ In class: sign up for informal presentations; assignment of diagnostic writing assignment

F 1/11 → Introduction to the Holistic Garden

Meet in our classroom & we will walk over to the Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden together

- **Diagnostic Writing Assignment due Saturday 1/12 by noon**

Week 2 Keywords

T 1/14 Instructions + practice writing précis

W 1/16 William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature"

- **Précis of Cronon due Friday 1/18 by 8 am**

F 1/18 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 3 "Nature": Romanticism, Organicism, Attunement

M 1/21 MLK Day—NO CLASS

W 1/23 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp"; William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence"
→ submit "exit ticket" on three things you learned before leaving

F 1/25 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 4 "Nature": Romanticism, Organicism, Attunement cont'd

M 1/28 Emerson, "Nature"
→ In class: Close reading exercise 1 (choose 1 of 3 pre-selected passages to close read in class)

W1/30 Thoreau, "Walking"
→ submit "exit ticket" on three things you learned before leaving

- **Close reading of your own chosen passage due Friday 2/1 by 8 am**

F 2/1 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 5 Interlude: Strategies for Getting Started

M 2/4 Orientation to Library Resources + Discussion about Citations (note: we will head over to Fondren Library as soon as class starts, so please arrive on time)

W 2/6 Thesis Statement and Outlining Workshop

- **Thesis Statement and Outline of Essay 1 due Friday 2/8 by 8 am**

F 2/8 NO CLASS (Spring Recess)

- **Essay 1 due on Sunday 2/10 by 8 am**

Week 6 "Life": (Non)Humans, Identity, Boundaries

M 2/11 Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow" and "The Obligation to Endure" from *Silent Spring*
→ In class: First sentence revision exercise + instructions for first paragraph revision exercise (first sentence revisions submitted in class as "exit ticket")

W 2/13 Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man* (film)
→ submit "exit ticket" on three things you learned before leaving

F 2/15 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

- **First paragraph revisions due Friday 2/15 by 8 am**

Week 7 "Life": (Non)Humans, Identity, Boundaries cont'd

M 2/18 Ursula Le Guin, *Buffalo Gals, Won't You Come Out Tonight*
→ sign up for student conferences

W 2/20 NO CLASS—Student Conferences regarding upcoming proposals 2/20 & 2/21

F 2/22 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 8 "Energy": Economics, Apocalypse, Environmental Justice

M 2/25 Indra Sinha, *Animal's People*

- **Project proposals due on Tuesday 2/26 by midnight**

W 2/28 Indra Sinha, *Animal's People*
→ submit "exit ticket" on three things you learned before leaving

F 3/1 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 9 "Energy": Economics, Apocalypse, Environmental Justice cont'd

M 3/4 Wrap up Indra Sinha, *Animal's People*

W 3/6 Peer Review Workshop on Essay 2 (**bring 3 hard copies of your first draft to class**)

F 3/8 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

- **Essay 2 due Friday 3/8 by midnight**

Week 10 Spring Break

M 3/11 NO CLASS

W 3/13 NO CLASS

F 3/15 NO CLASS

Week 11 "The Body": Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Bioengineering

M 3/18 Octavia Butler, *Dawn*

W 3/20 Octavia Butler, *Dawn*
→ In class: instructions given for exemplary essay exercise

F 3/22 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 12 "The Body": Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Bioengineering cont'd

M 3/25 Wrap up Octavia Butler, *Dawn*

- **Upload your chosen exemplary essay to Canvas by Tuesday 3/26 by 8 am**

W 3/27 Discuss exemplary essays
→ In class: sign up for final presentations

F 3/29 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 13 Interlude: Preparing to Present Your Work

M 4/1 Writing workshop on assembling and organizing your research

W 4/3 Giving Effective Oral Presentations Workshop

F 4/5 Garden day (meet at the Garden)

Week 14 Radical Hope/Radical Agency

M 4/8 Anna Tsing, "What's Left?," from *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*
→ submit "exit ticket" on three things you learned before leaving

W 4/10 Writing Consultations/Catching Up Day

F 4/12 Last Garden day

Week 15 Tying It All Together

M 4/15 Tim Morton, "Critical Thinking" from *The Ecological Thought*

W 4/17 In-class Presentations

F 4/19 In-class Presentations

- **Research Paper due Friday 4/26 by midnight**